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PROPOSITIONS ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, AND ON THE FORMATION OF ANIMALS.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—I am induced to send you the annexed propositions in physiology, from having observed the following question in a southern paper, copied from the New York Star, which I shall quote entire. The question has been already answered in your Journal of the 20th of September, in an article under the head of Animal Magnetism. Proceeding on the supposition that there was an elastic fluid pervading all space, on the motions and undulations of which, among the particles of matter, depend all material phenomena, vital as well as chemical and mechanical, that article reconciles the facts of animal magnetism with the operations of natural laws. Allusion was also made in it to sympathy, fascination, irritation and embryotic influences, and the forms of organized bodies, as susceptible of a better explanation by this than any other hypothesis. These propositions may be regarded as a continuation and more definite exposition of the same views. The facts which I am able to bring forward in support of them warrant my urging them upon the attention of physicians and other scientific men, as containing the germ of a discovery of greater importance to the interests of mankind than any which has been made since that of the circulation of the blood.

Boston, Oct. 16th, 1837. BENJAMIN HASKELL, M.D.

"*Philosophical Problem.*—Why has Nature not produced any square forms?

"Nature has produced circular, curvilinear and polyangular forms, in endless variety, but not one square form.

"The public prints throughout the United States and in Europe, are respectfully requested to publish the above question, a correct answer to which will embrace the discovery of an universal law of nature, which has been lost to philosophy for several thousand years."

1. The true method of arriving at the knowledge of the nature and use of the nervous system, is to presuppose a fluid to exist in organized matter, which, undulating and moving in currents, disposes the nervous molecules in the manner in which the nervous tissue exhibits them.

2. The currents of this fluid *commence* on the superfices of bodies, and take a centripetal direction. They are first set in motion by the

impression of agents without, on the sensitive surfaces; and the development of animals, from the circumference to the centre, according to the law of Serres, well known by the term Lex Serrenia, is a complete illustration of this position.

3. The ganglions on the posterior nervous chords of the spinal marrow were *originally* the points of stasis or dispersion of the fluid moving towards the centre, their centripetal force being there counteracted by the opposing force of fluid at rest or moving in contrary directions. By supposing a fluid to move in this way through the nervous corpuscles of the polypus, its first effect would be to form the single isolated nerve and ganglion of the molluscous animal.

4. The nervous chords intervening between the ganglions and spinal marrow, may be regarded as the appendices of the spinal marrow. They were formed by the projection of a fluid from the ganglion towards the spinal column, in consequence of the attraction produced by a current passing longitudinally upward, or downward, or both, along the spinal canal, the union of these several currents forming the spinal marrow itself; one tendency to the formation of these longitudinal currents arising from the meeting of the fluid of the opposite ganglions in the centre.

5. The anterior chord had its origin in the reverse or after-current, that passing from the spinal marrow towards the surface transmitting the stimulus of volition, and may also be considered as an appanage of the spinal marrow. This current must join the nerve anterior to the ganglion, to correspond with the law of Ampere, that two currents moving in the same direction attract each other; the other current moving from the ganglion towards the circumference.

6. There exist two circles through which the nervous influence passes, viz. one, where sensation and volition are unnoticed; the other, where they both take place. The former, commencing at the external surface, is reflected back at the ganglion; the latter, commencing at the same place, is reflected back from the cerebro-spinal apparatus.

7. The cerebrum and cerebellum are but the greater development of the circles of which a single nerve affords the type. The corpora striata and optic beds, containing grey matter, and the corpus dentatum, were, like the ganglions, the points of stasis and accumulation of the fluid passing up the crebro-spinal cavity, from whence, as its intensity increased, simultaneously with the elevation of the animal in the scale of intellectual life, it proceeded forward and formed the convolutions, the grey matter of which corresponds to the grey matter of the spinal marrow, and the diverging and converging fibres of Spurzheim and Gall correspond to the anterior and posterior chords.

8. The cause of variety in the manifestation of function in the several nerves depends on a principle closely analogous to that by which different crystals exhibit different forms and colors when subjected to the influence of polarized light, and may lead, at some future day, to the discovery of the intricate structure of the nervous expansions, as the phenomena of polarization has led to the discovery of the composition of crystals in the disposition of the atoms which form them; the motions

of the fluid among the nervous corpuscles both affecting, and being affected by, the disposition of the corpuscles.

9. The analogy to this mode of formation of the nervous system is found in the gradual formation of brooks, creeks, and rivers, by water on the surface of the earth. The water penetrates the soil everywhere, and everywhere is seen to form grooves, which afterwards help to confine it in its course, and impress upon its currents modifications, which, within certain limits, are fixed and constant. So the nervous fluid penetrates the whole body, and is everywhere active, like the blood. But by the various tendencies to move in different directions which it receives from the motions of the elastic fluid without, or "stimuli," combined with that play of its motions within which constitutes life, it must form to itself channels, which enable it to concentrate itself and pass with celerity from one part of the body to another. These channels are the nervous chords.

10. The reason that animals and vegetables have rounded forms, and minerals angular, is this:—in the former exists a motion compounded of the principle of life and of that which accomplishes crystallization. To effect crystallization, perfect rest of the fluid medium in which it takes place, is necessary. In animation a moving force commences at the punctum saliens, or in consequence of an external impression, and is always interfering with the crystallizing force, in the manner that rays of light interfere, producing curvilinears, and are explained by M. Fresnel on the theory of light depending on the undulations of ether. It is owing to the same cause that drops of water have a circular form, and the waves of the sea are rounded by the undulations of the atmosphere.

11. The simplest mode of undulation is exhibited in the formation of the circular and radiated animals. Their form is described by the circular wave made by dropping a pebble perpendicularly on the surface of a fluid, and by the radiation of light.

12. The second simplest mode is exhibited by the spiral animals, or sea snails. In these a perpendicular motion occurs along with the horizontal. Its analogy is found in electro-magnetism, in that appearance of polarized light made to pass through quartz, which Mr. Herschel has compared to a corkscrew, and still more plainly by the little whirlpools so often seen in the eddies of a running stream. It seems impossible for a theory to be false, and explain the formation of these simple animals as this does. The probabilities in its favor are infinite.

13. The fluid accumulates internally, and by its attractive force, as it expands and endeavors to fly off in all directions, exerts a pressure on the body from within, outwards, and occasions it to grow to a certain point. This point is attained when it has acquired such an extent of surface, that an equilibrium is established between its intensity and the inertia of matter; as when the atmosphere reaches the height of 45 miles, the elasticity of air is counterbalanced by the weight of the particles of air. The analogy for the accumulation of the fluid by the motions of the particles among each other, is found in the excitement of electricity by friction; and that for the diminution of its intensity by the increase of surface, is found in the inverse proportion of the intensity of

electricity and the extent of surface of the prime conductor. Hair, bristles, spines, scales, &c., are formed by the fluid passing off from the superfices of bodies, and hence the reason why they are found most abundantly over those parts of the body where the fluid is directed in the greatest quantities, as over the brain in man, and diffused over the body in animals. The black color of the negro is the slightest degree of the same effect. The blowing of a soap-bubble, which expands between two pressures of the same medium, the ordinary pressure of the atmosphere without, and the constantly accumulating pressure within, is a simple and almost perfect illustration of the expansion and rounded form of all organized beings.

14. The reason why the fœtus is expelled from the uterus at nine months, is, that all its organs being then developed, it cannot receive from the mother the same amount of fluid it has been in the habit of receiving, and which the system of the mother has been habituated to yield to it. The fluid then accumulating in the mother will be most naturally directed towards the nearest focus of irritation, which is the uterus, and will produce muscular contractions of that organ. The next transition will be to the breasts, when the uterus, being disgorged of its contents, can receive no more of it.

15. We can also form a conception of the preservation of the type of every species of animals, from generation to generation. For we suppose this fluid to be the cause of light, as well as electricity, &c.; and on the same principle that it forms images by its vibrations in reflection and refraction (which images are the exact portraits of the originals, both in form and color), those same vibrations acting on matter so mobile as that which constitutes the embryo in its earliest stages, and the image of both parents being the ones most constantly impressed upon it in consequence of its long continuance within the body of each, the type of the race, and, to some extent, of the individual, will be reproduced forever. Hence, too, the form of each of the bodily organs.

16. The explanation of the physiological experiments of Magendie, in which forward motion is produced by destroying the crura of the cerebrum, backward by destroying the crura of the cerebellum, rotatory by destroying the crura of either side, &c., depending on the law of equilibrium of fluids, will account, also, for the erect attitude of man.

17. The ciliary motions lately discovered in animals, by Purkinje, Mayer, and others, and the undulatory movements lately noticed by the celebrated botanist Brown, of organized molecules in fluid matter, depend on the vibration of this fluid, as do light, heat, electricity, magnetism, and gravitation.

18. It is well known that the vibrations of a musical instrument will, if continued a length of time, throw another, at a distance from it, into the same series of vibrations, and elicit the same sounds, provided it harmonizes with it. Assuming that these vibrations depend on the ether present in the atmosphere and in all bodies, which gives them elasticity, this phenomenon must be owing to the tendency that this fluid has, when undulating, to provoke the same undulations through all its extent. Now supposing this fluid to exist among organic molecules,

free and mobile as they are found in the polypus, it cannot undulate in a given way among these molecules without disposing them in a certain manner, *and the manner in which it disposes them will be that which renders them least liable to interfere with that particular mode of undulation.* It is on this principle that the ear is formed, with a spiral cochlea, semicircular canals, &c. In like manner that variety of undulation which causes light, is sufficient to form the eye out of polypous matter. The cause of the eye existing in one spot, instead of being spread over the whole body, as well as its being rounded, instead of angular like a crystal, is the interference of other vibratory motions, as that which constitutes life, together with those made by other external impressions, which modify it at the edges where they meet that particular class of vibrations engaged in forming it. What is true of the formation of one organ, is true of that of all the rest. The support which this proposition derives from the slow and gradual evolution and perfection of these organs, from the inferior animals up to man, is in the highest degree astonishing.

MESMERISM.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—It is needless to add anything to my former remarks, to demonstrate my high estimation of animal magnetism, and my confidence in the immense benefits of its general diffusion. In the present letter, it is my object to notice some of the obstacles, which have hitherto injured its reputation, and prevented its progress. In the first place, both the magnetiz*ers* and the magnetiz*ees* seem to be still under the influence of many old imperfections and prejudices, and to have operated more for exciting wonder and curiosity, than for real utility. Most of their finest exhibitions have been intermingled with feats very similar to those which are performed by any common juggler; and in many of their performances, there are obvious omissions and defects, which give occasion to the cavils of the skeptic. If one woman's breast has been removed without her being awoke from her magnetic sleep, why is not every patient made insensible of pain, during all common surgical operations? There have, certainly, not only been careless, but inhuman, oversights in this respect. It is no excuse to say that the patient was not in such feeble health, as to be susceptible of the magnetic influence. By depletion, evacuation, total abstinence, and starvation, the nervous system of the stoutest man might speedily be reduced to the magnetic level. Nor is the common excuse, that he had not been sufficiently magnetized to be brought under the full effect, satisfactory. Why not magnetize him to the hundredth time, rather than let him endure the pains of lithotomy? Why did not the philosophical Colonel, during his aerial voyage, and in the subsequent walks, let his companion tell her own story, rather than constantly direct her by, what the lawyers call, *leading questions?* Why not settle the whole matter at once, beyond the reach of any quibbling caviller, by having her read every sign, and the name on every door, in their imaginary promenade in Broadway? Why did not the Right Reverend Prelate, instead of employing her in describing the furniture and pictures, and the portrait of the man in his *shirt sleeves*, in his friend's house—very probably by the same course of leading questions, as were employed by the Colonel—set her at once to read the lettering on the backs of the books, lying on the centre table? By a few thorough processes like these, the most captious skepticism might be convinced and silenced in ten minutes, and there could be no loop hole for a single cavil to escape. Why did the Colonel allow her to make the blunder of going into the wrong kitchen? Why could she not read one word within the sealed envelope, as well as another? Is a mill-stone any more transparent from its being an inch thinner in one place, than in another? Is it not an opaque mill-stone still? The great difficulty seems to arise, from the magnetizers and the magnetizees not being sufficiently familiar with their own art, and from their not being aware of but a small part of the advantages which are the necessary result. They seem to suppose, that one unaccountable fact is sufficient to establish its reality, and are not aware of the great handle that will ever be made by a single failure. The skeptics adopt the maxim of the late eccentric John Randolph, that when a single addle egg is suffered to find its way into a pudding, the addition of a hundred new-laid eggs will not make the pudding sweet. Nothing, done by the halves, is ever well done. The magnetizer must commit himself horribly, if he ever attempts to magnetize a person whose nervous system, he is not sure, is first reduced to such a state of atony and susceptibility, as to be excitable by the slightest impression, made either on the mind or body, either by contact, sympathy, or imagination. Then there will never be needed the excuse, that the patient had not taken a sufficient dose of magnetic influence.

It should be especially recollected, that every new and beneficial project, to become popular, must be advocated—so prone are mankind to follow respectable leaders—by distinguished public characters. If the Secretary of the Treasury had been magnetized, he would never have fallen into the mistake of employing, as deposite banks, those which were unable to redeem their notes in specie. Or at any rate, he ought to have had the heads of their directors examined by the phrenologists, to determine whether they were worthy of the confidence of the government. By some such means, he might have easily saved the government the embarrassment of refusing what were apparently its own bills. Let the magnetizers first strike at the head, and immediately put our politicians and great men under magnetic influence, that some efficient measures may be instantly adopted, upon safe and sound principles, so as immediately to put an end to popular clamor and discontent. Let the phrenologists also be active, and exhibit, before every election, the characteristics of the head of every candidate for the suffrages of his fellow citizens. Let the homœopaths join them, and cure every disease of body or mind by the sure, safe and pleasant course of infinitessimal medicine. Let the irresistible argument of never-failing success be at once brought before the public, in all its force. A universal revolution and reformation will be the speedy consequence. Enough of overwhelming evidence now exists, if the homœopaths, the phrenologists, and the magnetizers could only have decision and magnanimity sufficient to divest it of all embarrassing circumstances. In fact, the mistakes and false pretences, which are the sources of the skeptical cavils, when rightly viewed, are the strongest arguments in favor of these all-important discoveries and improvements. Talk not of the addle egg, or the alloy from blunders and mistakes. The very idea of a counterfeit, supposes that there is such a thing as sterling, standard coin. There could be no motive for any magnetizee to pretend to more than can be actually done, to see more than can be seen, if the magnetic influence did not actually enable the possessor to distinguish more than can be done by other eyes. Though Ann More deceived, by pretending that she lived without eating at all, she actually possessed the faculty of dispensing with food, nearly as much as a hybernating animal, during winter. There was an uncommon fact at the bottom. Perhaps nothing has ever suffered more by the hasty tampering of the inexperienced and unskilful, than homœopathy, phrenology and animal magnetism. There has been a swarm of mere pretenders, and the public have not always been able readily to distinguish the counterfeit from the true coin. Judging from the many failures, and often ridiculous blunders, I should imagine that most of those, who were actually the richest in these valuable commodities, are often troubled with many pieces of base metal, which have accidentally found way into their pockets. Unless there is some remedy for such evils, the progress of these all-important arts will be infallibly retarded. The wheat must be winnowed from the chaff. An art that fails one time in four, and is liable to mistakes even in its most favorable exhibition, for all practical purposes is no art at all.

I would not, however, look upon such all-important subjects as homœopathy, phrenology and animal magnetism, with such desponding views. As far as any reliance, in such matters, is to be placed upon the most credible human testimony, these arts are founded upon a firm and unshaken basis. The fault lies not in the art, but in the unworthy, superficial professors. It does not need *leading questions;* and trifling tricks, resembling legerdemain, are beneath its dignity. It is the mistake of the conductor alone when he leads the magnetizee into the wrong cellar kitchen; and when, in his narration, he assumes an air of credulity, and exhibits the excitement of a fanatic, he only injures the cause which he injudiciously attempts to support. In such cases the advice of old Hecuba holds good, *non talibus auxiliis.* Mesmer.

Oct. 9, 1837.

REPORT ON THE RADICAL CURE OF HERNIA.

[Continued from page 64.]

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

Sir,—The remarks in your Journal of the 11th inst. on the importance of the "Report of the Committee on Hernia," has induced me to enlist your pages to distribute it more generally among the members of our profession.

Respectfully, &c.

Boston, Oct., 1837. E. W. Leach.

Anatomical View of the Anatomy of Hernia.

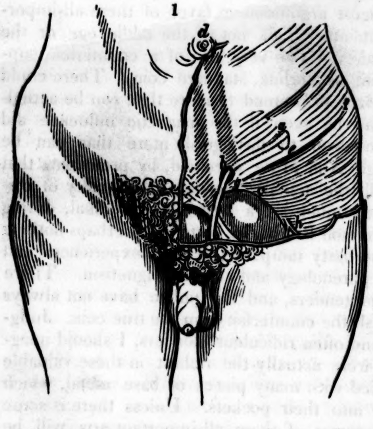


Fig. 1.—The skin and superficial fascia removed from the left side of the abdomen, and the left groin, so as to display the surface of the tendons, the position of the abdominal rings, and canal, &c.

a The internal abdominal ring, marked in dots, as seen through the tendon of the external oblique muscle.

b The external ring, formed by a natural separation of the fibres of the same tendon; the spermatic cord seen passing through it to the scrotum, and the dotted line between the two rings marking its course upwards, under the tendon, through the abdominal canal.

c The spot where the tumor in femoral hernia is generally seen when it rises from beneath the fascia lata of the thigh, the femoral canal not being visible in this view, because it is hidden by Poupart's ligament.

d The umbilicus.

e The middle of Poupart's ligament.

f The anterior superior spinous process of the os ilium.

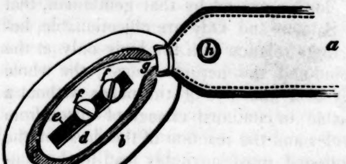
g The body of the os pubis, forming the lower boundary of the external ring.

h The saphena vein passing through the fascia to join the great femoral vein.

The inventions and improvements of Dr. Chase, many of which have been adopted since the presentation of the Preliminary Report, extend to all parts of the truss and its appendages, and his attention to minute but highly important details has been carried to an extent never equalled by any of his predecessors in this branch of surgery. The complete instruments employed by him are—1st. The Inguinal or Common Truss. 2d. The Ventro-Inguinal Truss. 3d. The femoral Truss. 4th. The Umbilical Truss. 5th. The Umbilical Belt. 6th. The Double Truss. Each of these demands separate notice, and in most of them the following parts require distinct examination. (*a*) The Block; (*b*) the Block-attachment; (*c*) the Spring and Strap-attachment; (*d*) the Appendages.

(*a*) *Of the Block.*—The block of this truss was warmly approved in the Preliminary Report (Op. cit. p. 323), and it has amply maintained its character throughout the more recent investigations; it is so perfectly adapted to the form of the parts interested in common inguinal hernia, that the Committee are unable to perceive in what manner it could be improved; nor has it ever failed, under their observation, in retaining the bowel both permanently and completely during the time of its employment, after the first few days required for the accurate adjustment of the instrument. Nothing farther appears necessary to prove the decided superiority of this block over all others known to the profession, in the particular form of hernia for which it is designed.

Chase's Common Inguinal Block, with Attachment.



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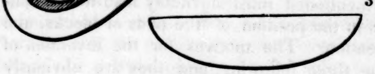

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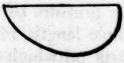

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Fig. 2.—*a* The extremity of the main-spring of the truss.
b The block.
c The brass block-rider, the screws by which it is attached being covered by the block-slide.
d The block-slide.
e The window in the block-slide.
ff The two broad-headed screws of the block-adjustment, securing the rider to the slide, and when loosened, sliding freely in the window.
g The soft iron flexible neck, attaching the block-slide to the main-spring.
h The button for the pelvic strap, which is generally used for the perineal strap also.
The proper perineal strap-button on the end of the block-slide is omitted in this and some succeeding figures, to prevent confusion.
Fig. 3—Longitudinal section of the block.
Fig. 4.—Transverse section of the same.

(*b*) *Of the Block-attachment.*—Two very important improvements upon the old modes of attaching the pad to the spring of the truss are observable in the block-attachment of the inguinal truss. The block is surmounted by a thin oval plate of brass, termed by the inventor a *block-rider;* and this is adapted to the under surface of an iron plate of nearly similar form, called the block-slide, to which it is attached by means of two round-headed screws, playing freely, when loosened a little, in a longitudinal fenestrum in the block-slide, so as to admit of any required change of the position of the block in this direction, to the extent of about an inch in the trusses designed for adults. The block-slide is connected to the spring by means of a round neck of soft iron, about three quarters of an inch in length, sufficiently stiff to resist any change of shape during the most active movements of the patient, and sufficiently pliable to act like a universal joint under the hands of the surgeon. The combined action of the slide and the neck enables us to adjust the block with the utmost precision to the edge of Poupart's ligament, the rout of the abdominal canal, and the internal ring, whatever may be the peculiar form of the abdomen of the patient, while the block remains invariably in the exact position chosen by the surgeon; advantages possessed by none of the trusses previously in use, so far as they are known to the Committee. These improvements are, in themselves, sufficient to add very greatly to the value of the instrument.

(*c*) *Of the Spring and Strap-attachment.*—The endless varieties of form which have been given to the springs of trusses, render it apparently impossible that anything intrinsically novel, in this part of the hernial apparatus, should be presented to the public hereafter; but it is of the utmost importance that the profession should determine what class of springs are calculated to give the greatest degree of security and permanency to the action of trusses.

This subject has been amply discussed in the work of Dr. Chase, already repeatedly cited; and the Committee are prepared, after due reflection, to coincide in the opinion expressed by that gentleman, that the semicircular steel springs of Salmon and Ody are objectionable, because they are brought into accurate relation with the body only at the spots corresponding with the spine and the hernial orifice; the whole arch of the spring resting loosely over the side of the pelvis without a fixed location, and remaining liable to continual change of place from the movements of the glutei muscles and the reaction of the dress of the patient. The changes just mentioned must inevitably lead to the danger of corresponding changes in the position of the pads or blocks, and consequent insecurity of retention. The motives for the invention of this class of springs were the three following, and they are obviously fallacious. 1st. It was supposed that the pressure of the spiral elastic springs, being exerted throughout their whole length, renders them liable to derangement by the motions of the parts on which they press; but, excepting on the front of the hypogastric region of the abdomen, those parts have so slight a degree of mobility—based as they are upon the solid structure of the pelvis, and almost uninfluenced by muscular contractions—that their alterations of figure are of no real importance. The changes in the figure of the hypogastric region are fully compensated by the elasticity of the spiral springs, and those of the parts over the ring of the ilium are successfully counteracted by perineal straps, so that the accuracy and permanence of retention are not contravened when spiral springs are employed. 2d. It was supposed that the changes of shape in the hypogastric region required some mode of adjustment more complete than that effected by the elasticity of the main spring, to enable the pad or block to accommodate itself at all times to the form of the parts; and hence the ball-and-socket pad attachment, to which the semicircular spring was deemed peculiarly adapted. But, if desirable, this mode of attachment may be as readily employed in connection with the spiral spring. Your Committee do not deem it desirable; because the ball-and-socket attachment renders secure but one point on the back of the pad or block, while the circumference may be tilted in any direction by the pressure of an intestine from within, almost as readily as by the movements of the abdomen, to which the pad is designed to yield; for the soft and compressible surface of the hypogastric region cannot securely prevent this tilting when the adjustment of the pad is not remarkably accurate, or when the propulsive force of the intestine in hernia is considerable. A third argument urged in favor of the introduction of semicircular springs was drawn from the tendency of the strap attached to the spiral spring trusses to draw upwards, and thus displace the pad; but this difficulty is completely removable by giving to the spiral spring and the accessory parts of the truss a proper form and disposition, as will be explained hereafter.

Your Committee are therefore of opinion that Dr. Chase has done wisely in adopting the spiral spring, and retaining the strap so as to encircle the whole pelvis by the truss, in preference to the semicircular spring and universal joint of Salmon and Ody's instrument, and the modifications of the same by the late Dr. Hull, of New York, the Rev. Mr. Reed, of Georgia, &c. &c.

Although there is nothing positively novel in this part of the inguinal truss of Chase, the inventor has established definite rules for the degree of temper and the extent of the various curvatures of the spring, and also for the position of the strap-button, which render it easy to adjust the instrument more securely and permanently in all cases than can be done when these points are left to the discretion of instrument-makers. Experience has decided that there is an advantage in giving an elastic temper to all that portion of the spring which intervenes between the pad-attachment in front and the opposite sacro-iliac symphysis in the rear, but that the portion extending from the latter point to the opposite side of the pelvis should be so far softened as to admit of adjustment by being permanently bent. Three inches of the hinder extremity are left ductile in all the trusses of the full size; and thus the necessity of making an instrument expressly for each individual case (the great difficulty in the employment of spiral springs entirely of tempered steel) is completely obviated, without sacrificing the accuracy of the adjustment on the one hand, or its permanency on the other.

It has been customary to curve downward the anterior end of the spiral spring, so that when the part which lies across the back is horizontal, the front extremity may approach more nearly toward the abdominal canal. In Chase's inguinal truss this curvature does not exceed three-fourths of an inch, and its commencement is found far back upon the costa ilii when the instrument is applied; so that the spring, in passing forward from that point, winds downward below the anterior superior spinous process without encroaching too much upon the bellies of the glutei muscles or disturbing the proper position of the spring and strap on the back part of the pelvis. Any further increase of this curvature is attended with inconvenience, by giving the direction of the strap too much obliquity, and disposing the instrument to tilt upward in front; and such increase is rendered altogether unnecessary by the soft iron neck of the pad-attachment. In the last three inches of the anterior end of the spring there is another curvature, resulting from a slight torsion of the axis of the generating curve of the spring, which brings the flat side of this part of the spring into more complete correspondence with the surface of the hypogastric region—a matter of much importance to the comfort of the patient, and one giving additional security to the position of the instrument.

It has been customary, almost invariably, with truss-makers to place the strap-button upon the plate or expansion which supports the pad, but Dr. Chase has very wisely affixed it to the anterior end of the spring, by which means the obliquity of the strap is much diminished, and the pelvis is enclosed by the instrument in a direction approaching very nearly to the circle, the strap lying altogether above the level of the block-slide, and the disposition of the instrument to tilt or ride upwards being reduced almost to nothing.

The Committee consider the establishment of a fixed model for the triple curvature of the spiral spring, and the position of the strap-button, as a highly important recommendation to the instrument under notice.

[To be continued.]

POTHOS FŒTIDA.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

I HAVE been in the habit of examining indigenous plants. I send you the result of my observations on POTHOS FŒTIDA, *Mich.*; Symplocarpus *fœtidus*, *Nutt.*; Ictodes fœtidus, *Big.* The seeds and root are the parts used; the seeds are by far the strongest, and retain their properties for years. The root loses many of its properties by drying. The whole plant has a fœtid odor, which is owing to a volatile essential oil, which I have never collected. Its taste is pungent and acrid, but less disagreeable than capsicum or arum. Medicinally it is an acrid tonic and nervine; when given in suitable doses, and repeated at proper intervals, it imparts warmth to the body, increases the force and fullness of the pulse, allays morbid mental irritability, relieves depression, elevates the mind, and produces a highly pleasurable state of feeling. When given in over doses, it produces burning and irritability of the stomach, headache, somnolency and vomiting.

I have found it highly serviceable in several species of limosis, catarrhal phthisis, dyspnœa exacerbans, flatulent colic and chronic rheumatism. My mode of using it has been to reduce the seeds and root to a fine powder, mix this with such other articles as I wished my patient to take, and give it in some convenient fluid, in as large doses as the stomach would bear, repeating it once in two, four, or six hours, according to the urgency of the symptoms. I have usually found ten grains of the seeds a full dose.

I consider it adapted to that condition of the system in which there is diminished nervous or muscular energy, torpor of the stomach or system generally, deficient or morbid secretions of the alimentary canal, unattended with irritability, and especially when these occur in habits impaired by the excessive use of alcohol. R. Pothos fœtida, gum guaiacum, āā, pulverized and mixed, is a favorite form where there is constipation attending the disease—given in quantities to regulate the bowels. Should acidity attend, I have been in the habit of adding magnesia, chalk, or carbonate of soda, according to circumstances. Should there be nothing to indicate either guaiacum or an alkali, they may be left out. In *diarrhœa*, pulverized nut-galls, or geranium maculatum, or any suitable astringent, may be united with it. Should a bitter be indicated, it may be united with pulverized cinchona.

I have used it for eight years past, and, as I think, with great benefit. In many cases I prefer it to any other acrid, being not disagreeable and more efficacious. Both the root and seed contain a large proportion of fecula, and are easily reduced to a powder by grinding in a coffee mill. About the first of September is the best time for collecting them. For keeping, the seed should be cleaned, dried and kept close in a glass bottle. The root should be cleaned, sliced, dried, ground, packed and corked tightly in a glass bottle. A.

Meriden, Ct., Oct. 1837.

BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON, OCTOBER 25, 1837.

INFIRMARY FOR DISEASES OF THE LUNGS.

From a small, unostentatious beginning, there has been a very valuable institution forming in this city, which is perfectly charitable in its character, and therefore claims the attention and fostering influences of all benevolent people. It is an infirmary exclusively devoted to the service of the poor who are suffering from diseases of the lungs.

By consulting the bills of mortality, it is apparent that pulmonary consumption has swept multitudes to the grave. The causes producing this melancholy fatality are still operating, as they always will in this variable climate. As the population increases, the mortality arising from various affections of the respiratory organs, increases in a corresponding ratio, till the aggregate, in any given year, in the large towns and cities in New England, and particularly in Boston, preponderates over all others in the nomenclature. Believing that it was possible to offer some temporary, if not permanent relief to those whose circumstances forbid them from procuring, in all instances, that advice which their condition obviously requires, an association was formed expressly to meet this demand. To this infirmary every one is welcome. The exact condition of the lungs is ascertained, so far as it has been found practicable by modern improvements and discoveries. Medicines are dispensed gratuitously, and, in a word, nothing is omitted which can be of utility to the patient. A charity based on this broad foundation, we trust, will find favor with an intelligent community. Gentlemen of the city, the clergy, physicians—indeed, all who sympathize with this class of sufferers—are invited to direct them to the infirmary, with full confidence in the skill and assiduity of the medical gentlemen who make a voluntary service of their labors.

For the present, the patients are examined and prescribed for in the east wing of the old stone Court House, on the first floor, entrance from School street, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 12 to 1 o'clock. A suitable edifice will be selected, we trust, within a reasonable time, in which the infirmary will be permanently located. It would be an act of injustice to the citizens of Boston to doubt their willingness to provide some quiet, commodious building, as soon as the business of this charity demands it, which cannot be long, meeting, as it does, the entire approbation of every friend of suffering humanity.

Hereafter, we shall speak more particularly of the medical regulations of the infirmary, publish statistics, and report cases—hoping, in the mean time, that editors of the public papers will have the kindness to notice the organization of the infirmary, for the sake of those for whom it was instituted.

Boston Medical Dispensary.—At a recent meeting of the subscribers to this charity, the following gentlemen received appointments :—*Consulting Physicians*, John Randall, M.D., Winter street ; and Solomon D. Townsend, M.D., Somerset street. *Visiting Physicians*, Henry G. Clark, M.D., Wards 1 and 3; Joseph Moriarty, M.D., Ward 2; Francis H. Gray, M.D., Ward 4 ; John H. Dix, M.D., Wards 5, 6, and 7 ; Warren I. Whitney, M.D., Broad street ; H. B. Inches, M.D., Fort hill; Abner B. Wheeler, M.D., Ward 10; H. I. Bowditch, M.D., Ward 11 ; John Odin, M.D., ward 12 ; Marcellus Bowen, M.D., South Boston.

Travelling Pestilence.—At Marseilles, the cholera was abating, when the last despatches were sent. Only 24 deaths were caused by it on the 6th of Sept. At Berlin, on the same day, there were 41 deaths by cholera. It had also broken out at Magdebourg, and some other places in that neighborhood. In Rome, more than two hundred persons were dying daily. On the 29th of August there were 366 new cases, and 217 deaths ; on the 30th, 357 new cases, and 211 deaths. There were on the same day, 1415 sick, under medical treatment. In Italy, generally, the cholera was abating. Very suddenly, it had began to show itself at Prague. From the 29th to the 30th, there were 100 new cases of cholera and 55 deaths at Berlin, and from the 30th of Sept. to the 31st, 102 cases and 64 deaths. The king dispensed with the usual exercises of the guard, and decided that as soon as there shall have been 20 cases of cholera in the camp, the soldiers shall be dispersed. At Breslau, from the 12th to the 29th, there were only 12 new cases. At Dantzic, the weather being cold and damp, the disease had nearly disappeared on the 12th. Naples was almost entirely free from the scourge at the last dates.

Plague in Germany.—At Sophia, which has a population of 50,000, there have been 200 deaths a day. It is now spreading along the right bank of the Danube, and may, if it journeys more northward, associate its terrors with its sister pestilence, the cholera. This horrible pestilence, plague, is gradually, but positively creeping into Europe, and unless some uncommon sanative exertions are immediately enforced to hem it in, and have its power exhausted where it now is, a desolation, unexampled in the history of disease, will assuredly mark its fearful progress. The continent seems destined to be overrun by this all-devouring minister of death.

Physician of the Massachusetts General Hospital.—A meeting of the trustees was held on Friday, Oct. 13th.—Dr. James Jackson resigned his place, having been the physician ever since the establishment of the institution, and Dr. Enoch Hale, Jr., of Boston, was appointed to the office so long and honorably filled by Dr. Jackson.

Medical Miscellany.—It is very sickly at Port Gibson.—M. Henry, of Montreal, is said to have discovered a remedy for hydrophobia.—Messrs. Fowler and Brevoort are lecturing on phrenology at Detroit.—D. J. Browne, the naturalist, has located himself at Tonawanda, near the Falls of Niagara.—Thirty thousand dollars have been appropriated by the Common Council of Boston, for the erection of a hospital for the insane and idiotic, at South Boston.—Dr. B. Ticknor is fleet surgeon of the exploring expedition, and attached to the frigate Macedonian. The assistant surgeons of the same vessel, are Drs. John L. Fox and J. J. Abernethy. Passed assistant surgeon of the store ship Relief, Dr. Edward Gilchrist. In the brig Consort, assistant surgeon Dr. Charles Guillon goes out medical officer.—Dr. Sweetser proposes to deliver a popular course of twelve lectures on the principles of health, at the Masonic Temple, commencing on Thursday evening, Oct. 19th. He is a fine writer and a worthy man.—Two albinos are exhibited at Philadelphia.—Seventeen cases of smallpox have recently occurred at Lowell.—Sickness has abated at New Orleans, and also at Natchez.—The plague has entirely subsided at Smyrna.—The yellow fever has been felt severely at Mobile, although the public authorities attempted to conceal its existence. From June to Oct. 1st, there were 275 deaths, of which 95 were in September.—The deaths in Central America, by cholera, amount to one fifteenth of the population.—Mr. Durant's exposure of the arts and impositions, as they are called, of animal magnetists, sells rapidly.—Richard K. Frost, a Thomsonian infirmary keeper, of the city of New York, has been arrested and held to bail in $5000, charged with having caused the death of T. G. French, by the administration of improper drugs. Dr. Ephriam Buck, of Boston, has given publicity to a similar case, at Malden—the patient being a victim to outrageous quackery.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Professor Mettauer's paper on Amputation of the Penis, with the respective communications of Dr. Hopton, Dr. Davenport, Dr. Jones, Dr. Knight, and X. Y. Z., and several translations from the Italian of Dr. Portal, are on file for publication.—Dr. Sweetser's work on Digestion was received too late for any further notice in this number.

DIED,—In Alton, Ill., Dr. William S. Emerson, son of Dr. Samuel Emerson, of Kennebunk.—In New Orleans, of yellow fever, Dr. Wellington Peabody, son of Dr. Nathaniel Peabody, of Salem, and Resident Physician of the New Orleans Infirmary, aged 21.—At Scituate, Mass., Dr. Cushing Otis.—At West Suffield, Ct., David Phelps, M.D., aged 30.—By the upsetting of a stage, near Bainbridge, Florida, Dr. L. Osborn, of the U. S. Navy.

Whole number of deaths in Boston, for the week ending Oct. 21, 23. Males, 9—Females, 14.

Consumption, 3—marasmus, 2—rheumatism, 1—croup, 1—typhus fever, 3—fits, 1—cholera infantum, 1—teething, 1—intemperance, 1—convulsions, 1—hæmorrhage of the lungs, 2—inflammation of the lungs, 1—spasms, 1—stillborn, 3.

MEDICAL INSTRUCTION.

THE subscribers have associated for the purpose of giving medical instruction. A convenient room has been provided for this purpose, which will be open to the students at all hours. They will have access to an extensive medical library, and every other necessary facility for the acquirement of a thorough medical education.

Opportunities will be offered for the observation of diseases and their treatment in *two* Dispensary districts, embracing Wards 1, 2 and 3, and *in cases which will be treated at the room daily.*

Instruction will be given by clinical and other lectures, and by examinations at least twice a week.

Sufficient attention will be paid to Practical Anatomy.

For further information, application may be made at the room, over 103 Hanover street, or to the subscribers.

EPHRAIM BUCK, M.D.
ASA B. SNOW, M.D.
E. WALTER LEACH, M.D.
HENRY G. CLARK, M.D.
JOSEPH MORIARTY, M.D.

Boston, August 9, 1837.

VACCINE VIRUS.

Physicians in any section of the United States can procure ten quills charged with Pure Vaccine Virus by return mail, on addressing the editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, enclosing one dollar, *post paid*, without which, no letter will be taken from the post office. Oct. 25.

UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS.

THE Lectures commence on the first Monday of November of each year, and continue for four months.

J. Augustine Smith, M.D., Professor of Physiology
Alexander H. Stevens, M.D., Professor of Clinical Surgery, (to lecture at the N. York Hospital.)
Joseph Mather Smith, M.D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic and Clinical Medicine.
Edward Delafield, M.D., Professor of Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children.
John B. Beck, M.D., Professor of Materia Medica and Medical Jurisprudence.
John Torrey, M.D., Professor of Chemistry and Botany.
John R. Rhinelander, M.D., Professor of Anatomy. (Lectures on General, Surgical and Pathological Anatomy.)
Alban G. Smith, M.D., Professor of the Principles and Practice of Surgery.
Amariah Brigham, M.D. Lecturer on Special Anatomy.
Demonstrators.—**James Quackenbush**, M.D., **J. B. Swett**, M.D.

The expense of attending a complete course of Lectures by all the Professors, is $108. The matriculation fee, which is $5, entitles the student to the use of the College Library. Graduation fee, $25.

Oct. 4—4t. NICOLL H. DERING, M.D., *Registrar.*

MEDICAL SCHOOL OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

THE Medical Lectures in Harvard University will begin on the first Wednesday in November, in Mason street, Boston, at 9 o'clock, A. M., and continue thirteen weeks. For the following four weeks, the Hospital and Dissecting room will be kept open, and some Lectures will be given, without additional expense, to such students as may remain.

The following Courses of Lectures will be delivered to the class of the ensuing season.	*Fees.*
Anatomy, by **Edward Reynolds**, M.D.*	$15
Chemistry, by **John W. Webster**, M.D.	15
Midwifery and Medical Jurisprudence, by **Walter Channing**, M.D.	10
Materia Medica and Clinical Medicine, by **Jacob Bigelow**, M.D.	10
Principles and Operations of Surgery and Clinical Surgery, by **Geo. Hayward**, M.D.	10
Theory and Practice of Physic, by **John Ware**, M.D.	15

By an additional act of the Legislature of Massachusetts, the opportunities for the study of Practical Anatomy are now placed upon the most liberal footing, and an ample supply of subjects for the wants of science will be legally provided at a small expense.

The Massachusetts General Hospital is open without fee to students attending the Lectures of the physicians and surgeons. Clinical Lectures are given several times in each week, and surgical operations are frequent.

To the Medical College is attached a Medical Library, a costly and extensive Chemical Apparatus, and Collections illustrative of Midwifery, Materia Medica, and Healthy and Morbid Anatomy.

WALTER CHANNING,
Boston, July 5, 1837. tNov. 1. Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

* Professor John C. Warren being in Europe, and having announced his intention not to return this winter, the Corporation of Harvard University have appointed Edward Reynolds, M.D., Lecturer on Anatomy the ensuing winter. Professor Hayward has also been appointed to deliver the Lectures on Operative Surgery. Sept. 27. W. CHANNING, *Dean.*

[Printers whose papers contain the advertisement of the Lectures, are particularly desired to insert the above.]

MEDICAL INSTRUCTION.

The subscribers are associated for the purpose of giving a complete course of medical instruction, and will receive pupils on the following terms:

The pupils will be admitted to the practice of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and will receive clinical lectures on the cases they witness there. Instruction, by lectures or examinations, will be given in the intervals of the public lectures, every week day.

On Midwifery, and the Diseases of Women and Children, and on Chemistry,	by	Dr. Channing.
On Physiology, Pathology, Therapeutics, and Materia Medica, - -	"	Dr. Ware.
On the Principles and Practice of Surgery, - - - - - - -	"	Dr. Otis.
On Anatomy, - - - - - - - - - - -	"	Dr. Lewis.

The students are provided with a room in Dr. Lewis's house, where they have access to a large library. Lights and fuel without any charge. The opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of Anatomy are not inferior to any in the country.

The fees are $100—to be paid in advance. No credit given, except on sufficient security of some person in Boston, nor for a longer period than six months.

Applications are to be made to Dr. Walter Channing, Tremont Street, opposite the Tremont House, Boston.

WALTER CHANNING,
JOHN WARE,
GEORGE W. OTIS, JR.
WINSLOW LEWIS, JR

Cct. 18—tf

THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL is published every Wednesday, by D. CLAPP, JR. at 184 Washington Street, corner of Franklin Street, to whom all communications must be addressed, *post-paid.* It is also published in Monthly Parts, each Part containing the weekly numbers of the preceding month, stitched in a cover. J. V. C. SMITH, M.D. Editor.—Price $3,00 a year in advance. $3.50 after three months, and $4,00 if not paid within the year.—Agents allowed every seventh copy *gratis.*—Orders from a distance must be accompanied by payment in advance, or satisfactory reference.—Postage the same as for a Newspaper.